

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RABAT 04510 261346Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 261247Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6206
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 4510

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, MO
SUBJ: NEW MFA POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

1. ON JULY 18, KING HASSAN APPOINTED AHMED CHERKAOUI, A FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO THE NEWLY CREATED MFA POST OF DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS. CONVOKED BY THE KING TO RECEIVE HIS ASSIGNMENT, CHERKAOUI CONFIDED TO AMBASSADOR THAT THE KING HAD SAID THAT HE WANTED CHERKAOUI "TO BE HIS MAN" IN THE FONMIN, AND WOULD WANT HIM TO UNDERTAKE SPECIAL PROJECTS FROM TIME TO TIME. KING INDICATED HE DID NOT KNOW TOO WELL AND THEREFORE WAS "NOT PARTICULARLY COMFORTABLE" WITH THE CURRENT PEOPLE IN THE MINISTRY BELOW FOREIGN MINISTER BOUCETTA WHO WAS ABSENT ON FOREIGN MISSIONS MUCH OF THE TIME. CHERKAOUI ADDED THAT BOUCETTA HAD GIVEN HIS FULL SUPPORT TO HIS TAKING ON THIS JOB. CHERAKOUI WILL BE THE FOURTH RANKING PERSON IN THE MFA.

2. CHERKAOUI, WHO HAD BEEN WITHOUT POSITION SINCE FOREIGN MINISTER BOUCETTA'S APPOINTMENT, SERVED IN THE
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PAGE 02 RABAT 04510 261346Z

MFA'S NUMBER TWO SPOT AS SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM AUGUST 1974 TO OCTOBER 1977. A CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER, CHERKAOUI IS A LEADING MOROCCAN EXPERT ON UN AFFAIRS. HE SERVED PREVIOUSLY AS CHIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIVISION FROM 1956 TO 1961 AND 1963 TO 1974. A VERY MILD AND UNASSUMING INDIVIDUAL, CHERKAOUI HAS AN EXCELLENT GRASP OF SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS. HE HAS PROVED TO

BE AN INFORMED SOURCE FOR US EMBASSY OFFICIALS ON DOMESTIC EVENTS AND POLITICS. CHERKAOUI IS WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND HAS BEEN WILLING TO HEAR OUT US POSITIONS ON ALL ISSUES, ALTHOUGH HE REMAINS GENERALLY RESTRAINED IN HIS OWN COMMENTS CONCERNING MINISTRY AFFAIRS.

3. SINCE AT LEAST 1961 CHERKAOUI HAS BEEN A SUPPORTER OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF POPULAR FORCES, NOW THE SOCIALIST UNION OF POPULAR FORCES (USFP)--A LEFTIST OPPOSITION PARTY--AND REMAINS ON CLOSE TERMS WITH THE USFP LEADERSHIP. CHERKAOUI HAS DOWNPLAYED HIS POLITICAL CONNECTIONS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE HIS STATUS AS A CAREER CIVIL SERVANT.

4. COMMENT: KING HASSAN'S NOMINATION OF CHERKAOUI, A MEMBER OF THE USFP, TO A TOP POST IN THE MFA NOW HEADED BY ISTIQLAL PARTY CHIEF BOUCETTA AND LARGELY STAFFED WITH ISTIQLAL PARTY LOYALISTS MAY WELL INDICATE THAT THE KING IS AGAIN FOLLOWING HIS OLD STRATEGY OF PLAYING POLITICAL PARTIES AND FACTIONS AGAINST EACH OTHER.
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